

SQF CERTIFICATION EXPANDS MARKETS

ABOUT VALLEY POPCORN COMPANY INC. Valley Popcorn produces bags of popcorn, popcorn seeds and oil, toppings, supplies and poppers. The company has about 30 full-time equivalent employees at its 25,000-square-foot facility, which includes an office area as well as a store that features a variety of popcorn products for sale to the public. Owner and Chief Executive Officer Carl Freundl and his wife, Carol, founded Valley Popcorn in 1992 with six poppers in their small home in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The business moved to its current plant in Neenah, Wisconsin, in 1996. Customers include retailers and grocery store chains in Wisconsin and a large swath of the country.

THE CHALLENGE. As part of its ongoing plan to retain and expand its market opportunities, Valley Popcorn opted to pursue certification under the Safe Quality Food (SQF) program after qualifying inquiries regarding their food safety certification status were received from existing and potential customers. Valley Popcorn engaged the services of the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership to lead it through SQF certification, which is recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative and retailers and food service providers that demand a stringent, credible food safety management system.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. During the certification process, a WMEP consultant with an extensive background in food safety worked side by side with Valley Popcorn management and production personnel to lead the SQF certification process, which took about nine months to complete.

"The WMEP has the historical knowledge and understood that the commitment was a critical component for us. We had never dealt with SQF before."

-Steve Klegon, Director of Administration, Human Resources and Quality Assurance

RESULTS



\$4 million increase in sales as a direct result of SQF certification.



Focus on expanding distribution from about **25** to all 50 states.



Established a food safety program that involves all employees of the company.

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